

The Rufford Small Grants Foundation

Final Report

Congratulations on the completion of your project that was supported by The Rufford Small Grants Foundation.

We ask all grant recipients to complete a Final Report Form that helps us to gauge the success of our grant giving. We understand that projects often do not follow the predicted course but knowledge of your experiences is valuable to us and others who may be undertaking similar work. Please be as honest as you can in answering the questions – remember that negative experiences are just as valuable as positive ones if they help others to learn from them.

Please complete the form in English and be as clear and concise as you can. We will ask for further information if required. If you have any other materials produced by the project, particularly a few relevant photographs; please send these to us separately.

Please submit your final report to jane@rufford.org.

Thank you for your help.

Josh Cole, Grants Director

Grant Recipient Details	
Your name	LEMNUEL V ARAGONES
Project title	DUGONG CONSERVATION IN GUIMARAS, PHILIPPINES
RSG reference	11.02.06
Reporting period	MAY 2006-DEC 2007
Amount of grant	£5,000
Your email address	lemdva2001@yahoo.com
Date of this report	28 January 2008

1. Please indicate the level of achievement of the project's original objectives and include any relevant comments on factors affecting this.

Objective	Not achieved	Partially achieved	Fully achieved	Comments
Determine level of local knowledge regarding dugongs			√	Some 25% of fishers, and 40% of non-fishers interviewed know their dugongs
Determine perception of locals regarding dugong conservation			√	Some 80% of fishers and 73% of non-fishers interviewed said there is a need for dugong conservation
Identify and document fishing gears that tend to trap dugongs			√	Fish corrals, filter nets and gill nets have been identified as the main threats (i.e. dugongs tend to entangle)
Collect ecological data critical to the understanding of dugong ecology		√		Was able to collect some seagrass data and saw some dugong feeding trails but after the Aug 11, 2006 oil spill I never saw any feeding marks again.
Identify and map important dugong habitats		√		Some of the previously identified important seagrass beds have been affected by the oil spill in Aug 11, '06. Thus, I am not sure if these areas are still of the same importance to the dugongs
Initiate the development of a dugong conservation plan		√		The local officials (mayors and governor) have <u>all</u> agreed for the need to develop a dugong conservation plan. Very successful focused group discussions (note: before oil spill).
Facilitate the planning and eventual development of the dugong conservation plan	√			The locals and their local officials became too busy with the rehabilitation plan (environment, health, socioeconomics) as a result of the most destructive oil spill in Philippine history, so far. I lost the momentum then on.

2. Please explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled (if relevant).

Obviously, the worst unforeseen difficulty I had was the occurrence of the worst oil spill in August 11, 2006 in my study site. This affected the whole attitude of the locals and their local officials. I tried to tackle this by getting involved in the actual cleaning up and sort of mapping of impacted areas within the whole island province myself to show to them that I am not only interested in a single species (dugong) but the maintenance of the ecological integrity of the entire island. The impact of the oil spill was just too bad in some parts of the island though that many lives of the locals will never be the same again. So, their attitude towards conservation was sort of affected as well. That is, they sort of became sceptical.

3. Briefly describe the three most important outcomes of your project.

The following are the three (3) most important outcomes of my project. (1) The determination of the local knowledge regarding dugongs. **That is, some 25% of fishers and 40% of non-fishers interviewed know the dugongs.** (2) **Determination of the perception of locals regarding the need for dugong conservation. Where I found out that some 80% of the fishers and 73% of the non-fishers interviewed said there is a need for dugong conservation in the area. And the profiling of the stakeholders was in general very important achievement. These were key elements** to the understanding of where the dugong's place is in the local area and helped me a lot to strategize in introducing the notion of a Dugong Conservation Plan. (3) The identification and documentation of fishing gears that often trap dugongs is probably the most important achievement among those mentioned above. The fish corrals, filter nets and gill nets have all been implicated to trapping dugongs, which often result to death or injury of individual animals. I would include a fourth one – the fact that I was able to make all the local politicians from mayors to the governor agree on the need to develop a Dugong Conservation Plan is a major achievement.

4. Briefly describe the involvement of local communities and how they have benefitted from the project (if relevant).

As I said before, the locals became more aware of the plight of the dugong in their area and I could say its plight for the whole Philippines as well. Some of the locals actually helped me in distributing interview survey sheets (questionnaires) to various places in the island. They also helped in collecting the same forms. They also became appreciative that there are people or researchers like me who looks at the conservation of dugongs and relate this to how the humans and their activities could help achieve this goal. The local environment and fisheries officers became more aware of the issues surrounding the dugongs in their area. In general, they all became more educated of the conservations needs and the roles they have to perform to accomplish that.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes, actually I am planning to submit a proposal to avail of the second round funding from Rufford to continue the work I have started.

6. How do you plan to share the results of your work with others?

I plan to use some of my results for the opportunistic educational seminars around the Philippines. I also use most of the materials I got (like photos, graphs etc) for my lectures in teaching at the University of the Philippines. I also plan to write a manuscript from the initial results and submit it for publication in peer reviewed journals.

7. Timescale: Over what period was the RSG used? How does this compare to the anticipated or actual length of the project?

The actual period RSG was used was from May 2006 to December 2007. This is very comparable to the proposed length of the project, although most of the other objectives still were not achieved because of the reasons already stated above.

8. Budget: Please provide a breakdown of budgeted versus actual expenditure and the reasons for any differences. All figures should be in £ sterling, indicating the local exchange rate used.

Item	Budgeted Amount	Actual Amount	Difference	Comments
Personnel salary for Research Assistant	£ 2,080	£ 0	+ £ 2,080	I just couldn't afford it since I didn't get the funding from the other organization (supposedly for equipment, etc)
Equipment	£ 0	£ 489	- £ 489	Bought binoculars and GPS
Travel	£ 1,000	£ 3,200	- £2,200	I had 1 overseas trip when I was still based in USA, and the rest were my local airfare (travelled 1-2x/mo)
Accommodations	£ 1,920	£ 1,100	+ £ 820	I stayed in cheap places
Misc (posters, etc)	£ 0	£ 211	- £ 211	Food for seminars; Print copies of the posters
TOTAL	£ 5,000	£ 5,000	£ 0	

9. Looking ahead, what do you feel are the important next steps?

Next steps include: continue the facilitation of the development of a Dugong Conservation Plan and to continue to monitor the dugong sightings in the area and their use of seagrass beds.

10. Did you use the RSGF logo in any materials produced in relation to this project? Did the RSGF receive any publicity during the course of your work?

Yup, I used the RSGF logo in the materials like poster I presented in South Africa for the 17th Biennial Conference on the Biology of Marine Mammals. A replica of such poster (with RSGF) is now displayed in the Provincial Capital Hall of Guimaras as well as in my University (of the Philippines) in Quezon City. I used the RSGF logo and acknowledged your funding support in my presentations and seminars throughout Guimaras and in my University.

11. Any other comments?

I hope that you will continue to support this project (and other similar projects in the Philippines) since we really need financial support to do this sorts of projects since our national government has very low allocation for environment protection and conservation in general. And since I am already back here in the Philippines for good, I would really like to continue pursuing these sorts of research projects.